

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

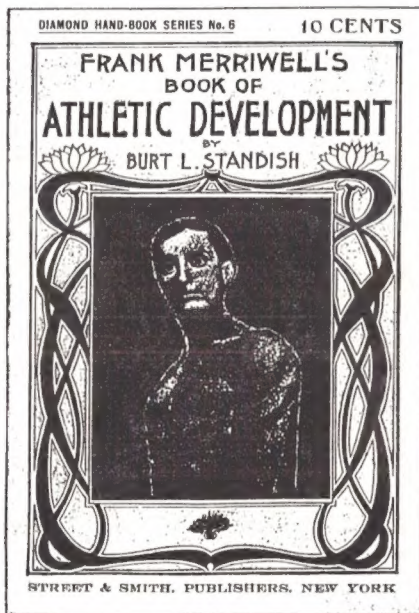
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## PRETISS INGRAHAM'S DIME NOVELS BASED ON HIS EXPERIENCES IN THE CUBAN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

By James L. Evans



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #246

DIAMOND HAND-BOOK SERIES

Publisher: Street & Smith, New York, NY. Issues: 13 (Highest number seen advertised). Dates: February 23, to August 1, 1901. Schedule: Semi-monthly. Pages: 150 to 200. Size: 7½ x 5". Price: 10¢. Illustrations: Designed pictorial cover. Contents: Subjects covered included fortune telling, letter writing, etiquette, and physical development. Though all were issued in 1901, the series was kept in print for a number of years.

## PRENTISS INGRAHAM'S DIME NOVELS BASED ON HIS EXPERIENCES IN THE CUBAN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

By James L. Evans

Prentiss Ingraham (1843-1903) was one of the most prolific of all dime novelists. Over a period of more than twenty years, he had more than one hundred fifty stories published in the Beadle Half-Dime Library series and even more in the Beadle Dime Library series.

The settings and topics of his novels are quite diverse, reflecting the varied experiences of his younger days. The last half of his life was spent largely in writing stories based on the adventures of his first half. As a youth of seventeen, he fought in the Civil War. He later served as commander of scouts in the Texas cavalry, where he was captured but later escaped. He fought in Mexico against Maximilian. As a soldier of fortune, he also fought in Austria and against the Turks in Crete. He lived in London briefly and then returned to the U.S. and still later joined the Cubans in their fight for independence from Spain. He did all these things by the time he was in his early thirties.

At a time when the U.S. was officially neutral in the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain, Ingraham successfully helped in several filibustering expeditions of Americans against the Spanish. He also served as an officer in both the Cuban Army and Navy. The Spanish captured him, tried him for filibustering, and sentenced him to be executed. He escaped, however.

Four of his stories in the Half-Dime Library series deal with the Cuban fight for independence in the 1890s, and these stories are largely autobiographical. This paper discusses these four stories. They are:  $\frac{1}{2}$ DL-1016;  $\frac{1}{2}$ DL-1023;  $\frac{1}{2}$ DL-1027; and  $\frac{1}{2}$ DL-1031.

First, a few comments about Cuban history. In 1849 Narciso Lopez, a Venezuelan-born officer of the Spanish Army in Cuba, began a movement to secure the freedom of Cuba from Spain. Among other things, he led several American filibustering expeditions against Spanish forces in Cuba. After eventually being captured, he was hanged by Spaniards in Havana in 1851. Without question, his actions aroused anti-Spanish feelings and made the island susceptible to the later uprisings.<sup>1</sup> During the early 1850s, there was a variety of classes in Cuba—varying from slaves and poor laborers demanding social reforms to factions of Cuban-born wealthy landowners who wanted freedom and independence from Spain but favored statehood in the U.S. to preserve slavery. After the Civil War, the Spanish government and some Cuban landowners were determined to keep the masses suppressed, and other rich Cubans wanted either self-rule and reforms or independence. The Ten Years' War began in 1868. Cubans of different and often conflicting motives persevered in their struggle; in spite of tremendous handicaps because of shortage of supplies, the Cuban rebels had conquered more than half of the island before being defeated in the bloody ten-year struggle that took more than 200,000 lives and destroyed several large plantations.

Although Spain made some improvements and abolished slavery in the next few years, there remained opposition to Spain because of such things as heavy taxation and dictatorial rule by Spanish officials. Thus friction continued until the war for independence was renewed in 1895.

Though Ingraham's four stories take place in the war during the 1890s and were printed in 1897, events then in Cuba and in the lives of the characters are an outgrowth of those in the Ten Years' War. Incidents of the Ten Years' War are often mentioned and sometimes explained; motives of the characters often result from events of the Ten Years' War. Because he was a skilled and experienced writer (with more than 300 dime novels to his credit by then) and because of his varied experiences in Cuba, Ingraham was well qualified to use the topic of the Cuban struggle.

Half-Dime Library 1016, *THE BOY BUGLER IN CUBA*, begins in Texas, and the first two-thirds of the story takes place there. The major character is Harry Agramonte, a versatile seventeen-year-old born and reared on a ranch in wild Texas. As boy bugler of the Cowboy Clan, he speeds his horse from ranch to ranch calling a meeting of the secret clan. The members meet and agree with the leader, Captain Charlie Chase, to conduct an invasion of Cuba to rescue Harry's older half-brother and Harry's own sister, who have been captured by the Spanish forces. All members are eager to make the invasion; the reader then gets background information creating a realistic picture of the long turmoil for Cuban independence and making the present events seem credible. We learn that after the Ten Years' War, Harry's father<sup>2</sup> who "had so bravely fought, so terribly suffered" "gathered together a remnant of his once grand fortune, and sought a home in the hospitable land of the United States." (1016-p. 2:3) Thus, the widowed father and his teenage son Rafael, both experienced veterans, settled in Texas and built a fine ranch home. The father remarried and had a daughter and the son Harry. During an Indian raid a few years later, the home was burned and the father slain while striving to save his family. The second wife lingered on only briefly. For protection against Indians and Mexicans, Rafael then organized the Cowboy Clan, which was a virtuous, secret, admirable, non-legal vigilante group of honorable men selected for "truth, honesty, and bravery." (1016-p. 3:3)

When Rafael and sister Lucita had once returned to Texas from school in the North, they had brought a beautiful Cuban girl named Stella. A neighboring rancher, who is assumed to be a Mexican named Don Ruiz Valdos, wanted to marry Stella. But Stella rejected him and returned to Cuba. Valdos later sought Harry's sister Lucita, but was also rejected by her. Cuban-born Rafael later went to the isle and married Stella. Lucita went to Cuba, and Harry, then a teenager, went there for the wedding and stayed several months, riding horseback over the area, sleeping in hidden caves, and enjoying the rough life that the native Texas cowboy would love. After Rafael returned to Cuba, Valdos was eager to have the power of being leader of the clan, but instead a neighbor named Charlie Chase was chosen to replace Rafael.

Now at the time of the story, when the second revolution for Cuban independence is in progress, the overseer of the Agramonte plantation in Cuba has secretly written to Harry that Rafael, because both his father and he had been Cuban patriots during the Ten Years' War, had been captured and was now a prisoner at the Spanish garrison. So were Rafael's wife and his half-sister. Thus, the Cowboy Clan is going to Cuba to rescue them, but before they leave, there are several pages concerning the first dissension ever within the Cowboy Clan. The members of the clan and readers learn that wealthy Don Ruiz Valdos is a traitor of the clan and is really a Spaniard. Valdos is kept prisoner by the clan, but he escapes from the guard, and we know that he will go secretly to Cuba to fight for Spain, and to get revenge against the Agramontes and Charlie Chase.

Anyway, since the seventeen-year-old Harry is well acquainted with

the terrain of the area near the Spanish fortress, he sneaks to Cuba and signals to the American yacht bringing the clan through the Spanish stockade. As the filibusters arrive, Harry meets them at the shore, and guides them along the trail he knew so well. One thing that we must keep in mind is that the Cowboy Clan is not going for the purpose of aiding the Cuban rebels in their fight for independence; the Clan is going solely for the purpose of rescuing Rafael Agramonte and his wife and sister. Since the Spanish sentinel at the garrison knew there were no Cuban insurgents nearby, he assumed the clan were members of the Spanish cavalry. Consequently, the clan members raid the fortress, overtake the Spanish guards, and free Rafael and wife, who hurry to the boat with the clan and disembark for Texas and safety. There is one mishap, however. Not until the boat is out of Cuban waters on its way back to the U.S. do they realize that Harry and his sister are not on board.

The reason is that Harry and his newly-freed sister had quickly hurried to the nearby Agramonte plantation to beg the overseer and wife to come to Texas with them. Thus, after a filibustering expedition that is 100% successful in rescuing the prisoners, Harry and his sister are now stranded in Cuba. Isn't that a miraculous way to end the story for which there will be a sequel?

The next story is Half Dime Library 1023—THE COWBOY CLAN IN CUBA. It begins in Texas with plans of the clan to return to Cuba to rescue Harry and his sister. Of course, Rafael and the entire clan he had founded years before are eager to go, and of course, Harry and sister know that the clan will soon return to Cuba for them.

Meanwhile, in Cuba Harry and his sister have problems; Harry hides in a secret cave but is later captured by the Spanish; Valdós appears as a new officer of the Spanish and threatens that if Lucita does not marry him, Harry will be killed. Valdós insists on an answer from Lucita that day, and the overseer with whom Lucita is staying tells her that Harry, the seventeen-year-old bugler, had been tried by the Spaniards, found guilty, and sentenced to be shot at sunrise the next morning. She can save him, however, by marrying Valdós whom she hates. But there is also another Spanish officer; this man named Bartello is Valdós's rival in both military affairs and love affairs. He also wants Lucita, and the two men agree to duel each other for her—later.

When the clan arrives that very night, they manage to get through the Spanish blockade without Harry's signals from the lagoon, then soon learn that he is a prisoner awaiting execution; of course, they quickly rescue him and cause many casualties to the Spanish.

Most of the clan members again soon depart from Cuba and return to the U.S. and their Texas ranches. Though rescued, Harry and sister do not accompany them; they and a few other members decide to follow his brother Rafael into the mountains to join General Gómez to fight for a free Cuba. So Half-Dime Library 1023 ends with Harry and Lucita still in Cuba, and we know that they will soon be in trouble again and the Texas clan will again invade Cuba to rescue them so that there will be another story in the series.

Next comes Half-Dime Library 1027, THE COWBOY RESCUERS IN CUBA. We learn that Harry did not get to the mountains to fight with brother Rafael, who instantly becomes a captain in the Cuban forces. Harry was captured by Valdós himself, who is still opposing Bartello, mostly because of rivalry for Harry's sister. Again Harry is to be shot by Valdós. Even if Valdós or Bartello kills the other, Lucita will be stranded with the demands of the winner. Ingraham then tells much about several lesser Cuban characters and their activities. By doing so, he leaves us in

suspense about the outcome of Harry and his sister, and he also gives a more comprehensive picture of the Cuban struggle against Spain. Later Valdós and Bartello both save face and save their lives by agreeing that Spain would suffer by losing either of them, and thus they postpone their duel. And the author saves the life of Harry Agramonte by having the two Spanish officers decide that since Harry is a U.S. citizen, they had best postpone (perhaps forever) his execution—or fear U.S. aid for the Cubans and get themselves blamed for the U.S. attack. As a result, Harry remains alive for the time being, and the story continues. Time elapses, adventures continue, and the Cowboy Clan from Texas arrives again. Rafael conducts a fake attack to lure some Spanish soldiers from the villa while the clan attacks the fortress and again rescues Harry and his sister. The attack by the clan is a dramatic success, and many of the clan head to the mountains to aid General Gómez and the rebel Cubans. But en route, Valdós attacks. There is a spectacular victory for the Texans, however, and the Spanish are again startled by the great skill of the Texans. Some of the clan then return to Texas, but all of the Agramonte family and some of the others remain in Cuba. The final paragraph gives a sense of immediacy and greater reality by saying that "there today the dashing riders are fighting bravely in the patriot ranks,..." (1027-p. 15:3). And the reader knows that there will be another story to give us the outcome.

Half-Dime Library 1031, *THE TEXAN HUSTLERS IN CUBA*, in the early part is much repetition of the events in 1027 and also background history that took place in the Ten Years' War and in the first two stories. More Texans come to Cuba again, and there are numerous encounters.

Ingraham records numerous other incidents and intrigues until he has nearly completed his 35,000-word quota for the story. Near the end, Harry and a man named Taos perform a great deed, and Rafael arranges for his younger brother to receive a commission. Harry modestly says that Taos deserves the credit; but Taos is also granted a commission, so Harry is willing to accept one. Harry is commissioned by General Gómez himself, an old man who had been friend and associate of Harry's father in the Ten Years' War. Surely youthful Harry partly earned his commission for his contributions to the Cuban cause. But Ingraham, aware of the politics of warfare, shows that Harry receives it largely because of the role his father and his brother had played. General Gómez says: "Your father was one of our most trusted generals in the Ten Years' War; your brother, here, was one of its boy heroes, and you are already following in their footsteps, I am proud to say." (1031-p. 13:3)

Both Agramonte brothers are now officers in the Cuban forces, and Captain Chase brings some three hundred more men, not just clan members this time but also "Texans, Mexicans, and Comanches, all fine lancers, dead shots, rough riders, and lasso throwers." (1031-p. 15:2) The ship leaves port to return to the U.S.; and the new forces, all from Texas, enable Gómez to strike a strong blow against the Spanish. The ending is similar to that of 1027: Ingraham comments that "the leading characters of this tale of facts" are still fighting "and later on it will be well to tell of the fight of the Cowboy Clan in the blood-drenched Gem of the Antilles." (1031-p. 15:2) The Half-Dime series of Beadle and Adams soon ended, or surely there would have been a fifth story about the Cowboy Clan in Cuba.

Certainly these stories are largely autobiographical. In fact, the lives of the fathers of the character Harry Agramonte and the author had similarities. Harry was born in Texas, but his participation in Cuba was an outgrowth of the role of his father in a previous war, the Ten Years' War. Ingraham's father also had an adventurous youth; as a sixteen-year-

old, Ingraham's father went as a sailor to Argentina and fought in a local revolution in South America.

By the age of eighteen, both Ingraham and the character Harry were adventurous youths having scoutlike experiences in Texas. Ingraham was captured there by Northern forces during the Civil War but escaped. When in his twenties, Ingraham also served successfully in the Cuban Revolution, helping numerous filibustering expeditions into the isle before he was captured; he was sentenced to be executed but escaped again. As a teenager of seventeen, Harry Agramonte served ably in Cuba, was captured repeatedly, was either rescued or able to make skillful escapes, and was twice sentenced to be executed. Each of the two men was skilled both at sea and on land, and each was a commissioned officer before the age of twenty. Ingraham had an aptitude for details and used them effectively both in his military service and in his writing; Harry was observant of details everywhere, especially regarding the Cuban terrain, and used this ability in his service.

The realism of Ingraham's stories is made more forceful to readers by occasional references to events and persons known to American dime novel readers of the time. He makes reference to such things as the *Virginius* (an American ship aiding the Cubans and captured by the Spanish years before); the two most noted Cuban generals of the time—Gomez and Macao—are frequently mentioned and occasionally appear in the story. Harry's scouting of the Cuban countryside during the six months he had lived there after his brother's wedding made it convincing that Harry would know the area well.

Ingraham superbly portrays such things as the continual prolonging of the revolution, and he consistently causes one event to lead into another. He shows the desire of men for revenge against a whole nation, and he shows the desire for revenge on a personal level. He skillfully uses Valdós' resentment over a girl's rejection as one motive for fighting against the Agramonte family in Cuba, and he later skillfully complicates the intrigue by showing the conflict between Valdós and Bartello, who are both fighting for Spain but are much more concerned over their personal success both in the military and in getting the hand of another girl.

I will comment on a few weaknesses of the stories. The repetition of events of the previous stories is essential for persons who read only one of the four stories; however, for anyone who reads all four stories in order, the extensive repetition in the last two of events in the first two seems to be an undesired intrusion. Although Ingraham continuously does a splendid job of showing that the Cuban struggle for freedom has gone on for years, there is practically no evidence of the suffering of the lower classes who actually did most of the fighting. They are the mere common soldiers who appear at a given place; the wealthy Cubans have suffered in many ways, especially emotionally and economically. Of course, the Cowboy Clan originally goes to Cuba solely to rescue the Agramonte family, not to help the rebel cause or to help the Cuban masses. And even in the second story, the filibustering expedition goes strictly to rescue other members of the Agramonte family. Not till late in the series is there much concern for others. Thus, the story in these four dime novels is not of the Cuban revolution; it is about the role of the wealthy Agramonte family during a part of the revolution.

And there are a few unrealistic things in the stories. The youthfully Harry is too good, too idealistic, too successful. The female characters are too lovely and are only cardboard figures used mainly as devices in the stories—even more so than in most dime novels. The Spanish guards are always either asleep or so easily deceived that the clan

can always get past them. The character old Taos and his daughter too easily win the trust and help of the Spanish sentinel, and the girl too easily passes as a boy; and coincidentally the old cook employed by the Spanish is a former servant and friend of the Agramonte family. But compared to most dime novels, these bits of improbability are minor. By having the Agramontes repeatedly captured, Ingraham is able to continue the story as long as he wishes; he could even prolong it through four more dime novels. We always sense the tensivity of the Agramontes' being prisoner, but we always know they will escape or be rescued, and then we know that they will soon be captured again. When some of the family decide to remain in Cuba and fight with General Gomez for the rebels instead of returning to Texas, we realize that the story can continue indefinitely.

One of the significant aspects of the series is the great ability of the members of the Cowboy Clan. They are Texans and superb men. In the first letter to Harry in Texas, the overseer telling of Rafael's capture says, "If you only had a hundred of those gallant mounted Texans here... whom your brother used to command, you could carry the fortress, rescue the Senor Rafael and the Senorita Lucita, and punish the cruel Spaniards for their infamous work." (1016-page 4:2) The Cowboys are always nearly superhuman. The Cubans all admire their skill, and the Spanish are amazed, bewildered, and demoralized by it. Characters make such statements as that of a Spanish officer who says, "How those Texans fight!" and "twenty thousand such horsemen could sweep this island from [one end to the other],... Oh, Senor! but they are fighters!" (1027-page 8:2) And in describing one attack, the author comments that "the advance guard of Spaniards were swept from their saddles, though hardly a horse was hit, so true was the aim of the Texans." (1027-page 8:3) Such comments by both author and characters certainly caused dime novel readers of the 1890s to admire the Texans.

The ambiguous role of the U. S. throughout the decades of the Cuban struggle is intermittently woven into the narrative. Many filibustering expeditions with supplies and/or men went to Cuba from the U. S., and many Americans were sympathetic with the Cubans, but some were not; the U. S. was officially neutral and many persons feared that the U. S. might be dragged into a war to help the natives of some Caribbean island. Thus, the Texans must be very careful with whom they negotiate to transport men and goods to Cuba. And while in the waters near Cuba, the cowboys must be on guard for not only Spanish but also U. S. enemies. The neutrality of the U. S. is perhaps best woven into the story when the Spanish officers agree to postpone indefinitely the execution of Harry; they reason that because Harry is a U. S. citizen, if they execute him without a reasonable trial, the U. S. might come to Cuba, causing harm to the Spanish cause, and far more important to them, get themselves blamed for the U. S. intervention.

Also, the realism of the story is heightened by such things as Ingraham's comments in the early part of 1031; he says: "I'm not dealing with fiction wholly, but with people and scenes that exist to-day." (1031-page 2:1) And in the one-sentence concluding paragraph of the last dime novel, Ingraham states that "As the Cuban war is a living reality to-day," he cannot complete the story because the leading characters of "this tale of facts are both Cubans and Spaniards still engaged in the desperate fight for and against Cuba Libre." (1031-page 15:2)

Prentiss Ingraham—one of the most prolific dime novelists—had a personal life as adventure-filled as any dime novel. His experiences in numerous countries added to the supply of knowledge he used in his stories. Without question, his role in the Cuban Ten Years' War supplied him with material to write these four dime novels so convincingly about incidents

in the Cuban struggle for independence in the 1890s.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ingraham wrote three stories about the Lopez revolution. They are ISA-DOR, THE YOUNG CONSPIRATOR, OR THE FATAL LEAGUE (½DL-402); THE BOY INSURGENT, OR THE CUBAN VENDETTA (½DL-412); and THE WILD YACHTSMAN; OR, THE CRUISE OF THE WAR CLOUD (½DL-412). Also, Ingraham wrote DL-906, THE CUBAN CRUISER: OR, THE PATRIOT CAPTAIN AFLOAT AND ASHORE: it deals with incidents in the Ten Years' War (1868-1878).

<sup>2</sup>Harry's father is surely a fictitious character, but his early life parallels the role of Ignacio Agramonte, a wealthy plantation owner who led rebel forces in his native province of Camaguey from the beginning of the Ten Years' War until he was shot in 1873. Unlike the historical Agramonte, the elder Agramonte of Ingraham's dime novels lived through the war and came to Texas in 1878. Nowhere does the author mention a given name for the elder Agramonte, but certainly Ingraham purposely chose the rare surname to correspond with that of Ignacio Agramonte.

#### INGRAHAM'S HALF-DIME NOVELS TAKING PLACE IN THE 1890S

1016—THE BOY BUGLER IN CUBA  
1023—THE COWBOY CLAN IN CUBA

1027—THE COWBOY RESCUERS IN CUBA  
1031—THE TEXAS HUSTLERS IN CUBA

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NEW YORK MAIL — JUNE 4, 1868

#### A REAL ALGER HERO.

#### PERSONAL SKETCHES. SINCLAIR TOUSEY, THE NEWSMAN.

HOW THE AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY BEGAN.

TEN CENTS A DAY TO FIVE MILLIONS A YEAR.

HOW A SELF-MADE MAN SUCCEEDS — SINCLAIR TOUSEY, ESQ.

For some years the name of Sinclair Tousey, Esq., has been prominent in both business and politics in New York. He has had quite a remarkable career. He was born of poor parents in New Haven, Connecticut, July 18, 1815, and is consequently about fifty-three years of age. He attended the public school for a brief period, but between his tenth and eleventh year he was obliged to find employment in a cotton factory in Dutchess County, New York, where he "first worked for pay." He speaks of his fingers being torn and himself wearied out for the most miserable wages. In his thirteenth year he was bound out to a farmer in Central New York, where he worked for three years. His experience at this place was most dismal, enduring constant hardship. During the whole time the total amount which he received for pocket-money was twelve cents. The only way he had of saving a little money in cold weather to buy mittens, none being furnished by his master, or any such necessary, was by trapping foxes and selling their skins. To achieve this he had to give the farmer's son one-half of the proceeds for the use of the fox-trap.

These were very bitter years of his life. His privations were not a source of physical pain, but his mind was greatly disturbed by the galling nature of his bondage. At length he resolved to leave, thinking that he could fare no worse. This was when he was sixteen years old. Without a cent in his pocket he started on his way to Connecticut, a distance of more than one hundred miles. For three days he tramped on—when hungry, asking for bread, and when night came, sleeping as best he could. He continued his wearisome journey for three days, when, worn out, foot-sore, and sick, he laid down by the roadside and fell fast asleep. He was

awakened by a farmer, who, driving along with his wife, saw him lying on the road. The kind-hearted man took young Sinclair into his wagon, and forwarded him by stage to Danbury, which brought the young adventurer within ten miles of his destination. Reaching Newton, he engaged himself to a farmer for a short time, and then apprenticed himself to a carpenter. He had a great spirit of industry, and nothing could induce him to be idle. While working at his trade, some relatives in New York advised him to come to that city. He was pleased with the proposition, and, having obtained the consent of his employer, set out, and duly arrived in New York. Here he became a clerk in a grocery store where he remained until 1832.

He was now stricken down with the cholera, and recovering, went to Saybrook, Connecticut, to recruit. When his strength was restored he engaged himself to a farmer near New London, where he worked for one summer for nine dollars a month. Investing the extra sum, which he received in guineas, he brought them to New York, where he sold them at a profit which more than doubled his capital.

He next became a carrier of Major Noah's *Evening Star* newspaper, and soon became noted in this line of industry. In the morning he carried a Democratic newspaper called the *Jeffersonian*, published by Casper C. Childs. He also collected the letters from over sixty letter boxes, then called sub-postoffices, and owned by private parties. He was a rapid walker, and went his rounds with a speed and punctuality which made him a most popular carrier. After this he went to New Haven to conduct the agency of the *New York Transcript*, a penny paper of considerable ability. The scheme to increase the circulation of the paper was not a success, though he gave all his industry to it. On his return to New York the publisher of the *Sun* induced him to go to Philadelphia to facilitate the circulation of that paper, but he did not meet with any better success than in New Haven. During his stay in Philadelphia he limited his expenses to ten cents a day for food and six cents a night for lodgings, which he obtained in a cheap lodging-house on the river side.

Subsequently he was employed on the *Herald*, then a penny paper, and was about the first carrier it had in the lower part of the city. His spare time in the afternoon was occupied in collecting the advertising bills of the same paper. He also delivered in Brooklyn or Jersey City the American reprints of the English quarterlies and *Blackwood's Magazine*. In 1836 he entered the service of a proprietor of popular medicine, and was at length appointed agent for all the States on the borders of the Mississippi. Proceeding to Louisville, Ky., at his own cost and risk, he established depots for the sale of the medicine in the principal cities, and local agents in the smaller towns, traveling much for that purpose on horseback. For several years he was energetically engaged in this agency. During this time he published the *Louisville Daily Times*, the first penny paper ever issued west of the Alleghany mountains.

He had now become tired of a life in the South and was anxious to return to the North. Accordingly, in 1840, he disposed of his business, and returned to the State of New York, where he engaged in farming, for which he had a great taste. This he followed for several years in connection with other business. In 1853 he sold his farm, with the intention of emigrating to the far West, for the purpose of farming. He had occasion, however, to come to New York, and while here was induced to give up his design of going to the West, and entered into business with the firm of Ross & Jones, general news dealers in Nassau street. The style of the new firm was Ross, Jones & Tousey; afterwards Ross & Tousey, by the withdrawal of Mr. Jones; and then again Sinclair Tousey, by the retirement of

Mr. Ross, both of these gentlemen receiving full compensation for their share in the business. When Mr. Tousey joined the firm the business amounted to from one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand dollars per annum, and they then bought most of their supplies second hand. Mr. Tousey enlarged the business in about seven years to over a million of dollars per annum. This was accomplished by the most unremitting toil. For seven years he came down to the store in Nassau street between three and four in the morning, summer and winter, and remained until late in the afternoon. He watched every department with his own eyes, and by his untiring energy and example gave to all the persons employed his own zeal. The firm became the general agents for the *Ledger*, Frank Leslie's numerous publications, and many others.

There was necessarily a great deal of rivalry between the different large houses engaged in the news business, and at length a plan was consummated for their union in an incorporated company. This was effected by the incorporation of the American News Company, which commenced business February 1, 1864, and was formed by the junction of the houses of Sinclair Tousey, H. Dexter, and Hamilton & Co., which had previously absorbed several lesser firms. Mr. Tousey was elected President of the Company, and his great executive abilities soon developed its business enormously. It gives employment to a large number of persons, and the sales are now several millions annually. Its dealings are with the news agents, which are now to be found in every city and village of the country, and by its wonderful system the vast editions of the newspapers, weekly papers and magazines are quickly distributed throughout the whole land. In some cases they take nearly the whole edition of the leading weekly papers. They also publish books. In February, 1867, a second company was formed, which is known as the New York News Company, of which David P. Rhoades, an old *Tribune* attache, is the President.

Mr. Tousey sometimes writes for the press. He is a member of the Union League Club, and is a prominent politician of very Radical proclivities. He is now a man of means, and some time since went to Europe for an extended tour. Proud of his several and successful struggles in life, he is a man of the people and the friend of the humble.

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### SEARCHING FOR BERTHA M. CLAY:

#### PROBLEMS IN RESEARCHING THE TOPIC AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY\*

By Arlene Moore

Finding the right place to begin any paper is usually a nightmare. Finding the right place to begin this paper has been worse. In fact, it is difficult to describe the topic because there was no Bertha M. Clay? That person never existed! She never existed in spite of flowery letters signed by her that appeared in the *New York Weekly*, in spite of a solemn death announcement for her in the same paper, and in spite of the claim that she had left a \$400,000 estate.

There is a slight problem, however. Street & Smith published over 500 novels under that name between 1900 and 1930. Who did write them if not her? In order to answer this question, one must first deal with the myths that surround this name. Reference sources say that Bertha M. Clay was a "house name" used by Street & Smith or it was a name used by men writers under which they wrote romances. Finally, it was a pseudonym used by Charlotte Mary Brame, a minor English writer of sensational romances. All of these are partly true.

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\*Paper presented at ACA conference, March, 1987, Montreal, Canada.

Charlotte Mary Brame was born in Hinckley, England, in 1836 and died there in November, 1884. Her writing has been described as "Mushy love stories for the English lower classes." Or, she was a minor writer of "sensational fiction." Contemporaries characterized her as a popular writer of light literature. While another said she wrote novels of a light, homely kind. Most of the novels we are concerned with appeared in the *Family Story Teller*, a part of the *Family Herald* paper. She was contracted by Wm. Stevens to write three novels and one Christmas special each year. Confusion grew about her name when an American publisher misspelled it and printed it BRAEME.

Research activities centered on three main areas of information. The first was to identify all novels that Brame actually wrote. This phase of research is almost completed with the indexing of the *Family Herald*. From 1870 until her death the *Herald* published 73 manuscripts signed C.M.B. Some of these are short stories, some novelettes, the rest longer novels. Efforts are also turning to other English story-newspapers to verify whether or not Brame published in them or not.

The second area of study sought to identify "other authors" who were published in the Clay series. These included both American and English writers. Some novels were probably plagiarized, some were acquired directly from other publishers, and some had been sold outright by the writers and thus not covered by reprint rights. This part of the study is partly completed since direct comparison of text is now needed.

The suggestion that men wrote some of the Bertha M. Clay novels seems to be accurate. The original story became public knowledge because of a series of law suits that were brought by the Street & Smith against the Ogilvie Publishing Co., first in 1883 and again in 1891. A short paragraph in the *Publisher's Weekly* during the 1891 trial quoted a witness who stated that Street & Smith "hired men to write under the name of Bertha M. Clay."

The last part of the study attempted to identify the men writers who were responsible for the other novels. The following names are traditionally connected with this series; Thomas C. Harbaugh, Frederick Dey, and John Coryell. Others are, Fraser Lockwood, Frederick Dacre, John W. Mackey, William W. Cooke, and William J. Benners. Two final names are more positively known, these are Thomas W. Henshaw, and Charles Garvice. Textual comparison is yet needed and for some writers, computerized vocabulary studies may be necessary.

Before continuing with research problems and areas for further study, a brief summation of information found in the Street & Smith records might illustrate the current status of this project. The records are of two kinds, copies of file cards that identify titles for the Clay novels, and copies of account or ledger books that Street & Smith used to indicate the publishing history of a title. A final list compiled by Mr. LeBlanc identifies the serial stories in the *New York Weekly*.

There are actually two time frames involved with this study. Between 1875, when the first Brame novel was published in the *New York Weekly*, and her death in 1884, only 26 titles had been published with some attributed to Bertha M. Clay. Between 1885 and 1891 another 15 titles appeared. From 1892 until 1905 another 40 titles were published under the Clay name. The time frame for these could be important because it may make it possible to identify the actual author. Which men were actively writing for Street & Smith during these dates?

The last time frame really began about 1900 and ended in 1928. This is the period that Street & Smith issued the Clay library and the New Clay library. The following statistics emerged from the Street & Smith

records by cross checking both files and account books. These statistics do provide a partial basis for further investigation. Information that has been gained can make narrower studies possible. Two other lists were developed from these records. Both show the series number and title for each novel and identifies in which series it appeared.

1. 120 of the Clay stories came from the *Young Ladies Journal*. Verification of author identification is still being sought.

2. 122 titles came from various Stevens publications. That is, the *Family Storyteller*, *Family Herald Supplement*, *Magazine of Fiction*.

3. 51 titles came from the *Family Reader*, another British publication.

4. 7 titles came from other minor British papers such as *Bow Bells*, *Daily Mail*, and others.

5. 317 titles were traceable to Street & Smith only. This means that they were only issued by Street & Smith and had no other author identified with them.

6. Nearly 300 titles could be attributed to one or more other authors, both British and American. (However, not all titles in the file had been used.)

Textural comparison will be necessary to confirm the original authors. The fact that many of these novels were already part of the Street & Smith inventory indicates the likelihood that some were merely reprinted in the Clay series.

The lack of major research studies in this field has been a serious hinderance in carrying out this study. Sources constantly repeated the same errors and, unfortunately, these are the ones traditionally used. *Publisher's Weekly*, the ENGLISH CATALOGUE OF BOOKS, the AMERICAN CATALOGUE, ALLIBONE'S SUPPLEMENT and HALKETT'S DICTIONARY OF ANONYMOUS AND PSEUDONYMOUS LITERATURE all apparently relied on the same information and much of it is not accurate in relation to the Clay series. Telephone contacts and written correspondence with Mr. LeBlanc and Mr. Cox gave much more useful information, as did issues of the *Dime Novel Roundup*. Telephone conversations with Miss Davis, the librarian in charge of Special Collections at Syracuse University also gave valuable information.

A trip to Hinckley and London proved particularly fruitless. The Hinckley Public Library did admit that they had a "file" of information about Charlotte M. Brame, but one of the librarians planned to "do something" with it and that person was on vacation and would not be back while I was able to visit the library. Church records in Hinckley were also "not available" because they were in Leicester being microfilmed. No one knew when they would be returned. The London newspaper library proved equally nonproductive. Hours were short, retrieval of source material very slow, and much of the material held was "too fragile to be handled."

Locating and using the Street & Smith records was crucial in being able to carry out any type of meaningful research. The files had been held by the Conde Nast Publishing Co. in a warehouse after the purchase of Street & Smith. Two drawer and four drawer file cabinets were all stored in movable warehouse storage bins and were piled in without order. Several days were needed to sort the cabinets and to locate the exact files needed. Even now, a second look might be warranted to double check the first search. This material is now at Syracuse University Library, with the rest of the Street & Smith collection. This material includes many of the Clay, New Clay, Eagle, and New Eagle novels. The most frustrating problem with these files and account books, is the deliberate use of blind entries in the records. The elaborate attempts to obscure author/title information makes one more curious about what was being hidden.

Johannesn's HOUSE OF BEADLE AND ADAMS eventually identified Charlotte Mary Brame. The fact that she was published as part of the Beadle and Adams history is because of a novel of hers that appeared in the Waverly series, which was part of the Beadle and Adams publishing venture. Generally, she is not considered a dime novel writer. Because of the lack of nearly any information about Brame in reference sources, efforts were made to locate Johannesn's notes which were used for his study. These were located at Northern Illinois University at DeKalb, IL. Copies of the notes of Hermon Pitcher were sent along with sources of other footnotes in Brame's entry. Information in Pitcher's letters indicated a tendency to "romanticize" or "exaggerate a little" which lessened the value of his statements. Mr. Pitcher also submitted a short essay to the *Dime Novel Roundup* about Brame.

Efforts to verify the authenticity of some of Brame's novels by using the Library of Congress records failed. Notes on LC cards in the pre-1942 set indicated that certain titles were rejected by Mrs. Brame's daughter as not having been written by her mother. Some of these titles are: THE EARL'S ATEONEMENT, HILDA, MARJORIE, and A PASSION FLOWER. When checking with the Library of Congress and asking about the note, they replied that no correspondence existed and that they had no way of knowing when or how the information came to them.

The history of the Street & Smith Publishing Company, by Quentin Reynolds, was particularly disappointing. Part of his account touches on which publisher printed the first Brame novel. Reynolds indicates that Robert Bonner of the *New York Ledger* was the first. So far, there has been no evidence to show that any of her works appeared in the *Ledger*. He also suggested that Mrs. Brame's daughter, May, also wrote under the Clay name. The problem with relying on Reynolds's work is the fact that so much is based on hearsay. There is no bibliography nor footnotes. Neither does he indicate the source for much of his conclusions. Many of his statements might be accurate, but until another source can be located to verify his, one must question the validity of some of his remarks. For research purposes, his work is useless.

Finally, a recent trip to Washington, DC, made a search of the copyright office possible. The intent of the search was to verify the names of the authors indicated for the titles identified in the Clay series. Two sets of records were checked with negative results. Almost none of the titles in the Clay series appeared in the copyright files. These files are arranged under the name of Street & Smith as the main copyright holder. A very few entries were noted for BRAEME; these seem to be the titles which Brame did write. The files for pseudonyms proved equally useless for verification.

To add to the problem, another list of 218 titles were found in the cards under Street & Smith. Many of them were by writers of the period and had been published by Street & Smith. None of these titles fit any of the series that Street & Smith published. Only a few of these were issued by other publishers and listed in the AMERICAN CATALOGUE or the ENGLISH CATALOGUE. It is possible that these titles are part of known series, even the Clay series; but unless one can trace them back to specific books, it will be difficult, if not impossible to make accurate identification. All in this group of titles were copyrighted between 1898 and 1910. Effie Rowlands, Charles Garvice, Mabel Collins, and Gertrude Warden are included in this latest list.

According to a research assistant in the copyright office, no attempt is made to verify the information which is given when the copyright application is filed. Neither is there any inspection of records. The

date of the earlier application is accepted as the valid one.

Future research should be centered on publishing history, the writers of story newspaper novels as well as on the novels themselves as a literary history. Finally, more concentrated study should be done on the use of pseudonyms by publishers and writers. Many questions arose in the course of this study. Nothing seems to have been done in researching internal working methods of publishers of the period. How did they negotiate for manuscripts other than with authors? Notices in *Publisher's Weekly* tell about fall and spring sales where book plates were sold. What other on-going arrangements were common? What arrangements did Street & Smith make with Norman Munro and *Family Story Paper*? How did Street & Smith acquire so many of the novels from *Young Lady's Journal*? What kind of relationship developed between American and British publishers?

Writers, of course, are an essential element in any understanding of the publishing period. Many are almost totally lost to literary history and many probably feel that the loss would not be great. That judgment is yet to be made and should be approached with caution. What and for whom they wrote is the important point. True, many wrote for money and that may have been the key element in their productivity. However, they wrote what people wanted and many had some sense of responsibility to their readers. More research should be done on individual writers. What is known of some needs expansion. Biographical details need to be pursued by searching for and collecting family papers, letters, newspaper accounts and so forth.

The novels, themselves deserve more study. Most could be called "genre" fiction today and perhaps this would be the best way of studying them. Many questions remain unanswered. How much were some of them changed? Frequently one reads of English novels rewritten for the American market. There is a question of popularity. Exactly what made some stories well read? What types were most popular? What groups made up the audiences for them?

Finally, the unravelling of the problems of pseudonyms is basic to this type of study. Textual criticism, computerized verification of vocabulary and direct comparison of texts will have to be carried out in order to fully identify the author.

In a way, it is not a question of literary merit that is involved. For their time and needs, the writing was satisfactory, if pedestrian or "hack." These writers provided something far more important. Just as today's genre writers offer escape, romance, adventure, and wonder, these writers did also. Their work may not be great or even good literature, but it was enjoyable.

To summarize the findings of this study, it must be admitted much is yet in a state of speculation. As this is the first attempt in identifying the writers of the Clay series, results are tentative for now.

Because of the information in Street & Smith records, a related project began. To verify some notes in the files, copies of other story newspapers were obtained. These are being indexed for all serial fiction and all short stories.

*Family Story Paper* is nearly completed, as are *Fireside Companion*, and *The Family Herald*. Only part of the *New York Ledger* was obtained and this will also be completed. These indexes will give other researchers a chance to study individual authors both for style and productivity, and provide answers to questions about publishing practices of the period.

Jim Nedila, 6821 Mill Wheel Dr., Lansing, MI 48911, wants special titles in the British BUFFALO BILL LIBRARY and BUFFALO BILL NOVELS. Anyone having some for sale should contact him.

\* \* \*

The Dime Novel Section of the ACA conference has released a tentative schedule. The morning sessions on March 30 will feature:

"Images of Girls in Stratemeyer's Boys Books," by Jack Dizer.

"Virgins, Vamps and Villains: Women in the Bloody Pulp," by Leonard Hullah.

"American Profits: Moral Capitalism in Horatio Alger, Jr.'s Ragged Dick," by John Ernest.

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"Foreign Reprints of American Dime Novels," by Edward T. LeBlanc.

"The Politics and Power of 19th Century Second Class Postal Legislation," by Lydia Schurman.

"Portrayal of Bigfoot Wallace in Dime Novels," by James L. Evans.

"Authors of Western Series Books in Standard Magazines," by Albert Tonik.

"Nick Carter Out West," by J. Randolph Cox.

"Images of the West in Children's and Adolescents' Series Fiction," by Kathleen Reuter Chamberlain.

"A Portrait of a Writer: The Letters of Harriet Lewis to Robert Bonner," by Arlene Moore.

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